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ABSTRACT

Project Opportunity is a continuing talent search and encouragement program that attempts to increase the number of black and white, minority/poverty students who continue their education beyond high school. The present study focuses on black students in Project Opportunity who were accepted at both integrated and black institutions and examines the reasons of these black students for choosing one type of institution over the other. Of the 30 black students in the program meeting the qualifying criteria, 22 chose to attend integrated colleges. Their reasons were based on 2 major criteria: (1) they saw integrated schools as offering a more challenging experience; and (2) they did not receive prompt and efficient admission information and notification from the black schools as to the awarding of financial aid. The 8 students who ultimately chose to attend black colleges did so primarily because they felt the atmosphere would be more relaxed and therefore more conducive to study. (HS)

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PROJECT OPPORTUNITY
REPORTS

Research and Evaluation
Report Number 1971-1

-- THE COLLEGE CHOICES OF THIRTY BLACK PROJECT OPPORTUNITY STUDENTS --

Project Opportunity is a continuing talent search and encouragement program operating at eleven demonstration centers in eight southern states. Funded primarily by the Ford Foundation and administered by the College Entrance Examination Board in cooperation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the program attempts to increase the number of black and white, minority/poverty students who continue their education beyond high school. The first group of 419 Project Opportunity students were graduated from high school in 1970, and 322 (77 percent) of them entered college or vocational/technical school; of the 322, 298 (71 percent of the original group) entered a two-year or a four-year college.

The program focuses on locations with large numbers of low income families, but there is no specified family income cut-off point that would exclude a student from the program. About 65 percent of the students come from families with incomes below $6,000. At two of the centers in Kentucky, all students are white; about 80 percent of the students at the Virginia center are white; at the other eight centers, all students enrolled in Project Opportunity are black. Altogether, some 78 percent of the participating students are black; 22 percent are white.

In 1970, 218 (75 percent) of the 291 black students who were graduated from Project Opportunity continued their education at either a college or a vocational/technical institution. A majority of these students (125 or 57 percent) chose black institutions while 93 (43 percent) finally chose integrated institutions. The present study, focusing on black students in Project Opportunity who were accepted at both integrated and black institutions, examines their reasons for finally choosing one type of institution over the other.

Project Opportunity Reports are available from the College Entrance Examination Board, Southern Regional Office, 17 Executive Park Drive, N.E., Atlanta, Georgia 30329. Project Opportunity is a cooperative endeavor of the College Entrance Examination Board and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

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The subjects of this study presumably could have attended either an integrated institution or a black institution since all had been accepted at least by one institution of each type. A total of 57 black students were accepted by both types of institutions. A survey form, together with a covering letter of instructions, was mailed to each of the 57 students. (The survey form and a copy of the letter are included in the Appendix.) Valid replies were received from 30 and they form the basis for this study.

The survey form consisted of two sheets with an identical set of 19 statements on each sheet. The first sheet asked the student to name the final college of his choice and then to check any statement which corresponded closely with the reason for his choice. Sheet two asked the student to name a college which he strongly considered but did not choose and to check any statement closely corresponding with his reason for considering the institution. The covering letter instructed the student not to name two black colleges or two integrated colleges. The covering letter also asked the student to describe in his own words the factors leading to his final choice.

Tables I through 8 show the relative importance of the items on the survey form for the students who chose the integrated colleges and those who chose the black colleges. Of the 30 students included in the analysis, 22 (73 percent) chose integrated institutions. (Lists of colleges chosen and considered are shown in Tables 9 through 12.)

FIRST CHOICE: INTEGRATED COLLEGES

The 22 students who chose integrated colleges expressed different relative priorities for choosing an integrated institution than they did for considering a black institution. Table 3 shows that the single most important differentiating factor in favor of integrated colleges was promptness and efficiency in processing of the application. In this regard one student wrote: "It would make things much easier for a student if. . .the Office of Financial Aid and the Office of Admissions would work together and know what the other is doing; and if they were more prompt." Another student who finally chose an integrated college wrote that in the case of the black college she originally wanted to attend, "I didn't even hear from the financial aid department saying that they would or would not offer me money."

In addition, many black students seem impressed by the greater challenges which they believe are to be found at integrated institutions. The most frequent reason describing the non-chosen black institutions was "felt certain I could do the academic work."

But these students then chose the integrated institutions despite the feeling that they "could do the academic work" at the black college. Regarding this particular item, 82 percent of the students checked it in describing their impressions of the non-chosen black institution, while only 45 percent checked it in describing impressions of integrated institutions. Attached comments show clearly how these students were thinking about this aspect of college choice: "[the chosen integrated college] offers me a challenge to get a good education, plus it allows me to compete with other students not in the same race as I. . . It will be a situation where only the strong survive and this is my opportunity to see if I'm strong academically or if I've been fooling myself." Another student responded: "I have talked with students who attend [the integrated college] and they tell me things about the school that I really did like to hear such as: it was rather hard and you have to study; these are really the challenges that I would like to face through college."

The two statements which most strongly differentiated the choice between integrated institutions and black institutions both concerned race: "I wanted to go to a college where I would feel comfortable with regard to race," and "I wanted to go to a college that has a good number of students of my own race." The students recognized race as a consideration mitigating toward black institutions but not as an overriding one. Few students thought student involvement in civil rights a factor in considering a college. Among students choosing integrated colleges, concern about race ranges from positive support for integration to one of indifference, exemplified in the contrast between the following two statements:

(1) "In a growing society I think it is important to meet and learn from all kinds of people. I have a chance of doing this at [the integrated college]"

(2) "Personally, I didn't think too much about whether the institution was black or integrated--all I want is a better education."

FIRST CHOICE: BLACK COLLEGES

Of the 30 students who returned survey forms that were analyzed, eight decided in favor of the black institution. Among these students, four most cited factors in favor of the black colleges were these: "feel comfortable with regard to race"; "a relaxed atmosphere"; "favorably impressed by students and graduates"; and "a good number of students of my own race." One of the eight students summed up her reasons for choosing the black institution by writing: "In order to study, you must feel relaxed in your surroundings."

ALL THIRTY STUDENTS

Table 7 shows the percent checking each item and the ranking of the items by all 30 black students when describing reasons for the institutions finally chosen, whether integrated or black. Heading the list were: "seemed to want me"; "prompt and efficient in processing my application"; and "a relaxed atmosphere." Trailing were items involving religion and athletics.

Table 8 shows the difference with which the 30 students checked the items with respect to integrated colleges and the black colleges. The two most sizable factors favoring integrated colleges were "better off with a degree from this college" and "prompt and efficient in processing my application." The two items most favoring the black colleges concerned race.

Tables 9 through 12 list the colleges that were either selected or strongly considered by these 30 black students. Only four colleges listed--Wesleyan University, Cornell College, Howard University, and Wilberforce University--are located outside the South. The most popular integrated institution was Auburn University in Alabama, and the most popular black institution was Xavier University in Louisiana.

IMPLICATIONS

Black students are saying, among other things, that they want to be wanted. Favored institutions show concern for prospective students by sending informational literature promptly, processing admissions applications efficiently, and awarding financial aid within a reasonable time.

Given a free choice, black students tend to choose institutions most responsive to their needs, regardless of whether they are integrated or black. Race is a factor but, overall, it is no longer a decisive one. Like many consumers of today, black students appreciate good service.

Table 1. Relative importance of items describing integrated colleges as checked by the 22 students who chose an integrated college over a black college.

% Checking	Item
68	"seemed to want me"
64	"prompt and efficient in processing my application"
59	"promptly supplied me with information"
54	"a relaxed atmosphere"
54	"better off with a degree from this college"
50	"favorably impressed with a representative"
45	"felt certain I could do the academic work"
41	"offered me the best financial aid"
36	"parents wanted me to go"
36	"not too expensive"
32	"favorably impressed by students and graduates"
27	"special academic program"
27	"a small college"
18	"feel comfortable with regard to race"
18	"counselor wanted me to go"
14	"students involved in civil rights movement"
4	"a good number of students of my own race"
4	"places emphasis on religion"
0	"places emphasis on athletics"

Table 2. Relative importance of items describing black colleges as checked by the 22 students who strongly considered a black college but finally chose an integrated college.

% Checking	Item
82	"felt certain I could do the academic work"
68	"a good number of students of my own race"
64	"feel comfortable with regard to race"
64	"favorably impressed by students and graduates"
59	"seemed to want me"
54	"a relaxed atmosphere"
41	"promptly supplied me with information"
36	"favorably impressed with a representative"
36	"not too expensive"
36	"a small college"
27	"prompt and efficient in processing my application"
18	"better off with a degree from this college"
18	"parents wanted me to go"
14	"offered me the best financial aid"
9	"students involved in civil rights movement"
9	"special academic program"
4	"places emphasis on athletics"
0	"counselor wanted me to go"
0	"places emphasis on religion"

Table 3. Relative importance of the difference in frequency with which items were checked by the 22 students who chose an integrated college over a black college. (Plus (+) differences are in favor of the integrated colleges.)

% Difference	
+37	"prompt and efficient in processing my application"
+36	"better off with a degree from this college"
+27	"offered me the best financial aid"
+18	"promptly supplied me with information"
+18	"counselor wanted me to go"
+18	"parents wanted me to go"
+16	"special academic program"
+14	"favorably impressed with a representative"
+ 9	"seemed to want me"
+ 5	"students involved in civil rights movement"
+ 4	"places emphasis on religion"
+ 0	"a relaxed atmosphere"
+ 0	"not too expensive"
- 4	"places emphasis on athletics"
- 9	"a small college"
-32	"favorably impressed with students and graduates"
-37	"felt certain I could do the academic work"
-46	"feel comfortable with regard to race"
-64	"a good number of students of my own race"

Table 4. Relative importance of items describing black colleges as checked by the 8 students who chose a black over an integrated college.

% Checking	Item
62	"feel comfortable with regard to race"
62	"a relaxed atmosphere"
62	"favorably impressed by students and graduates"
62	"felt certain I could do the academic work"
38	"offered me the best financial aid"
38	"better off with a degree from this college"
38	"prompt and efficient in processing my application"
38	"promptly supplied me with information"
38	"seemed to want me"
38	"not too expensive"
38	"a good number of students of my own race"
25	"parents wanted me to go"
25	"favorably impressed with a representative"
25	"special academic program"
25	"a small college"
12	"students involved in civil rights movement"
12	"counselor wanted me to go"
0	"places emphasis on athletics"
0	"places emphasis on religion"

Table 5. Relative importance of items describing integrated colleges or checked by the 8 students who chose a black college over an integrated college.

% Checking	Item
62	"promptly supplied me with information"
62	"favorably impressed with a representative"
62	"felt certain I could do the academic work"
50	"offered me the best financial aid"
50	"better off with a degree from this college"
50	"not too expensive"
38	"prompt and efficient in processing my application"
38	"favorably impressed by students and graduates"
25	"counselor wanted me to go"
25	"parents wanted me to go"
25	"a relaxed atmosphere"
25	"seemed to want me"
25	"special academic program"
12	"feel comfortable with regard to race"
12	"places emphasis on athletics"
12	"a good number of students of my own race"
12	"a small college"
0	"students involved in civil rights movement"
0	"places emphasis on religion"

Table 6. Relative importance of the difference in frequency with which items were checked by the eight students who chose a black college over an integrated college. (Plus (+) differences are in favor of the black colleges.)

% Difference	
+50	"feel comfortable with regard to race"
+37	"a relaxed atmosphere"
+24	"favorably impressed by students and graduates"
+24	"a good number of students of my own race"
+13	"seemed to want me"
+13	"a small college"
+12	"students involved in civil rights movement"
0	"prompt and efficient in processing my application"
0	"parents wanted me to go"
0	"special academic program"
0	"felt certain I could do the academic work"
0	"places emphasis on religion"
-12	"offered me the best financial aid"
-12	"better off with a degree from this college"
-12	"places emphasis on athletics"
-12	"not too expensive"
-13	"counselor wanted me to go"
-24	"promptly supplied me with information"
-37	"favorably impressed with a representative"

Table 7. Relative importance of items describing the colleges chosen by all thirty students.

% Checking	Item
60	"seemed to want me"
57	"prompt and efficient in processing my application"
57	"a relaxed atmosphere"
53	"promptly supplied me with information"
50	"better off with a degree from this college"
50	"felt certain I could do the academic work"
43	"favorably impressed with a representative"
40	"offered me the best financial aid"
40	"favorably impressed by students and graduates"
37	"not too expensive"
33	"parents wanted me to go"
30	"feel comfortable with regard to race"
27	"special academic program"
27	"a small college"
17	"counselor wanted me to go"
13	"students involved in civil rights movement"
13	"a good number of students of my own race"
3	"places emphasis on religion"
0	"places emphasis on athletics"

Table 8. The difference with which items were checked by all thirty students in describing integrated colleges and black colleges. (Rank based on the difference in the percentage of students checking the item for integrated college vs black colleges. The item with the greatest difference in favor of integrated colleges is shown at the top of the list.)

% Difference	
+30	"better off with a degree from this college"
+27	"prompt and efficient in processing my application"
+23	"offered me the best financial aid"
+20	"promptly supplied me with information"
+20	"favorably impressed with a representative"
+17	"counselor wanted me to go"
+14	"special academic program"
+13	"parents wanted me to go"
+ 4	"seemed to want me"
+ 3	"places emphasis on religion"
0	"students involved in civil rights movement"
0	"places emphasis on athletics"
- 3	"not too expensive"
-10	"a relaxed atmosphere"
-10	"a small college"
-27	"felt certain I could do the academic work"
-30	"favorably impressed with students and graduates"
-46	"feel comfortable with regard to race"
-53	"a good number of students of my own race"

Table 9. Integrated colleges chosen by the 22 black Project Opportunity students.

College	Number Choosing
1. Spring Hill College	1
2. Berea College	1
3. Auburn University	4
4. Peabody College	3
5. University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill)	1
6. University of Georgia	2
7. Louisiana State University (New Orleans)	1
8. Louisiana State University (Baton Rouge)	1
9. University of Tennessee	1
10. University of Alabama	1
11. Newcomb College	1
12. Belmont College	1
13. Meredith College	1
14. Georgia State University	1
15. Wesleyan University (Connecticut)	1
16. Cornell College (Iowa)	1
	22

Table 10. Black colleges chosen by the eight black Project Opportunity students.

College	Number Choosing
1. Fisk University	2
2. Xavier University	3
3. Tennessee State University	1
4. North Carolina A & T State University	1
5. Clark College	1
	8

Table 11. Black colleges considered, but not chosen, by the 22 Project Opportunity students.

College	Number Considering
1. Fisk University	5
2. Clark College	1
3. Tuskegee Institute	3
4. North Carolina A & T State Univ.	1
5. Howard University	3
6. Southern University (New Orleans)	1
7. Texas Southern University	1
8. Knoxville College	1
9. Xavier University	2
10. North Carolina Central University	1
11. Spelman College	1
12. Tougaloo College	1
13. Wilberforce University	1
	22

Table 12. Integrated colleges considered, but not chosen, by the eight black Project Opportunity students.

College	Number Considering
1. Newcomb College	3
2. University of Tennessee	1
3. East Carolina State University	1
4. Vanderbilt University	1
5. Louisiana State University	1
6. Georgia State University	1
	8

APPENDIX A

SHEET 1

Name of college finally chosen: _____

Place a checkmark beside any statement which was a reason for your choosing the above-named college or which describes it reasonably well.

_____ 1. I wanted to go to a college whose students are involved in the civil rights movement.

_____ 2. This college offered me the best financial aid.

_____ 3. I felt that I would be better off with a degree from this college.

_____ 4. This college was prompt and efficient in processing my application.

_____ 5. This college very promptly supplied me with all the information I wanted.

_____ 6. I wanted to go to a college where I would feel comfortable with regard to race.

_____ 7. My counselor wanted me to go to this college.

_____ 8. My parents wanted me to go to this college.

_____ 9. I wanted to attend a college with a relaxed atmosphere.

_____ 10. I met and was very favorably impressed with an official representative of this college.

_____ 11. This college seemed to want me as a student.

_____ 12. This college has a special academic program for students like myself.

_____ 13. I wanted to go to a college that places a lot of emphasis on athletics.

_____ 14. I have been favorably impressed by the students and graduates of this college.

_____ 15. This college would not be too expensive to attend.

_____ 16. I wanted to go to a college that has a good number of students of my own race.

_____ 17. I felt certain I could do the academic work at this college.

_____ 18. I wanted to attend a small college.

_____ 19. I wanted to attend a college that places emphasis on religion.

APPENDIX A

SHEET 2

Name of college strongly considered, but not chosen:

_____

Place a checkmark beside any statement which led you to strongly consider the above-named college or which describes it reasonably well.

_____1. I wanted to go to a college whose students are involved in the civil rights movement.

_____2. This college offered me the best financial aid.

_____3. I felt that I would be better off with a degree from this college.

_____4. This college was prompt and efficient in processing my application.

_____5. This college very promptly supplied me with all the information I wanted.

_____ 6. I wanted to go to a college where I would feel comfortable with regard to race.

_____ 7. My counselor wanted me to go to this college.

_____ 8. My parents wanted me to go to this college.

_____ 9. I wanted to attend a college with a relaxed atmosphere.

_____ 10. I met and was very favorably impressed with an official representative of this college.

_____ 11. This college seemed to want me as a student.

_____ 12. This college has a special academic program for students like myself.

_____ 13. I wanted to go to a college that places a lot of emphasis on athletics.

_____ 14. I have been favorably impressed by the students and graduates of this college.

_____ 15. This college would not be too expensive to attend.

_____ 16. I wanted to go to a college that has a good number of students of my own race.

_____17. I felt certain I could do the academic work at this college.

_____ 18. I wanted to attend a small college.

_____ 19. I wanted to attend a college that places emphasis on religion.

APPENDIX B

Dear :

We are completing a study regarding college choice and seek your help so that we, in turn, can help colleges do a better job of admitting students. As a student who has participated in Project Opportunity, you were encouraged to apply for college admission. According to reports we have received from your counselor, you made application and were accepted by at least two different colleges--one of which was a Negro college and the other, an integrated college. We would like to determine the reasons behind your final choice and the reasons which led you to strongly consider another type college.

The two enclosed sheets list reasons that students have given for choosing a particular college. On the first sheet, fill in the name of the college you have finally chosen and then check all reasons which influenced your choice.

On sheet two, place the name of a college you strongly considered but did not choose. Keep in mind that one of the purposes of this study is to learn why some students chose Negro colleges and others chose integrated colleges. So, if the college which you show on sheet one is a Negro college, then place the name of an integrated college on sheet two; if an integrated college is shown on sheet one, then place the name of a Negro college on sheet two. Finally, on the back of sheet two, we would like for you to describe, in your own words, what led you to choose one college over the others you considered. What things really influenced you? In what ways do you think colleges could improve the ways in which they give information to and admit students?

Please return your lists to me in the enclosed envelope by return mail since we hope to use the data at a meeting early in July. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Hugh R. Fordyce
Associate Director
Project Opportunity

HRF/jt

Enclosures